



UPDATES PHILIPPINES

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EDITORIAL

Marcos Jr. Maharlika Investment Fund: A Huge Scam in the Making

All indications show that Marcos Jr.'s pet bill, the 'Maharlika Investment Fund' will be a rip-off. The proposed law is a Marcos family project introduced to congress by the President's first cousin House Speaker Martin Romualdez and the President's son Deputy Minority Leader Sandro Marcos. Despite strong opposition, including big business organizations, Marcos Jr.'s henchmen in Congress are pushing hard for the bill's passage before the end of the year.

Why is the MIF so obnoxious? It is prioritized at a time when the country is undergoing an ever-worsening economic crisis. The national debt stands at a record high of PhP13.52 trillion (USD245.8 billion) as of end of September 2022. In 2021, government budget deficit has risen to PhP1.7trillion (USD34.7 billion) and the national trade deficit is at USD47.36 billion.

Marcos Jr. and his cohorts plan to build the MIF seed fund by scraping off from the very limited public money as well as from pension funds. In other countries, sovereign investment funds are formed with surplus wealth to generate financing. These wealth funds are usually seeded by windfall government profits from natural resources, such as oil or surpluses in government revenues.

The proposed bill seeks to grant the MIF blanket exemptions from taxes, and from laws meant to ensure transparency and good governance, prudent fund management, and fair competition. Under the present environment of systemic corruption, such conditions will enable the MIF to favour local oligarchs and foreign big business close to Marcos Jr. Given how Malaysia's similar wealth fund was plundered by the former prime minister, fears of the same outcome are well-founded. In 2021, Transparency International in its Corruption Perception Index gave a failing grade of 33% to the Philippines, where 86% of Filipinos think that corruption in the government is a big problem.

Lastly, but most importantly, entrusting such public funds at the discretion of Marcos Jr., son of world class thief and late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, is akin to appointing a thief to manage a bank! Marcos Jr. is at the forefront of their family's effort to prevent the recovery of their ill-gotten wealth. He is also using his authority to prevent the collection of PhP203 billion (USD3.64 billion) tax liability of his family. Former Chairman Andres Bautista of the Presidential Commission on Good Government, the reactionary government's agency tasked with recovering the Marcos ill-gotten wealth, said that only PhP170 billion (USD3.05 billion) was recovered from the estimated PhP500 billion (USD8.98 billion) loot. Through the MIF, the Marcoses can easily launder and legitimize the unrecovered plundered money.

As shown by the bill authors' tactical retreat from making the pension funds as the bulk of the seed capitalization for the MIF, a strong opposition can frustrate this malevolent Marcos scam. The Filipino people needs to unite and fight the Marcoses' schemes to consolidate their ill-gotten wealth and demand the return of all stolen funds to the Filipino people. **UP**



Image: Pinoy Weekly

CPP pays tribute to Ericson Acosta, condemns the AFP

The Communist Party of the Philippines gave the highest tribute to Ericson Acosta, an award-winning playwright and poet during a memorial meeting held on 7 December 2022 in the University of the Philippines in Quezon City. Ericson served as a resource person of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines in drafting the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms during peace negotiations with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines.

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The CPP said, “The entire leadership and membership of the Party give the highest tribute to Ka Ericson Acosta, communist cadre, Red fighter, teacher, student, playwright and poet. We pay tribute to Ka Ericson’s selfless service to the cause of the oppressed and exploited masses. Over the past decades, he performed his duties well and with full dedication. We raise the red banners of the Party and the New People’s Army as we pay homage to Ka Ericson and to all the heroes of the Filipino people.”

For many years, Ka Ericson played an important role in education and cultural work. He went around different places in the country to do research, study the situation of the masses, expose the roots of poverty of the peasants and workers, study and promote Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, and rouse the people to get organized and to defend their rights and struggle for national freedom,” the CPP added.

Acosta was doing research on the situation of farmers in Kabankalan, Negros Occidental, when he was abducted by soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines 94th and 47th Infantry Battalion, alongside local peasant leader Joseph Jimenez. The two were unarmed and summarily killed by the AFP soldiers.

The CPP condemned “in the strongest terms the AFP for the abduction and willful killing of Acosta and Jimenez while in custody... in brazen contempt of international humanitarian law and all imaginable laws of civilized society. It was an act of pure fascist evil meant to punish them for waging a struggle for land, and to intimidate the peasants, especially in Negros...”

The CPP concluded, “Without a doubt, Ericson Acosta is an Andres Bonifacio of our times. His life of sacrifice and service inspired many artists and ordinary people to take up the cause of national democracy. The manner of his death incites greater hatred for the fascist military and its campaign of terror. Ericson’s martyrdom will surely serve to strengthen the resolve of more and more people to take the path of revolutionary resistance.” **UP**

NPA scores 7 military actions in Bukidnon, Negros and Masbate

The New People’s Army launched at least seven victorious military actions against the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police in multiple areas across the provinces of Bukidnon, Negros, and Masbate in the past month.



Image: Revolution.nu

In Sibalay City, the NPA-Southwest Negros ambushed and killed two intelligence agents of the AFP 47th Infantry Battalion on 24 November in Camindangan village. The NPA seized two calibre .45 pistols, ammunition, three magazines, two cellphones and one grenade. According to Andrea Guerrero, NPA-Southwest Negros spokesperson, the armed action serves as “a warning to all AFP and PNP spies and assets.”

Elsewhere on the island, the NPA-Central Negros mounted multiple sniping operations across different areas in Guihulngan City. NPA troops fired at the PNP

substation in Trinidad village on 25 November and wounded a police officer. The NPA also fired at the Army Patrol Base in Sandayao village on 23 November wherein a soldier of the 62nd Infantry Battalion was wounded. On 21 November, the NPA also fired at two different units of the 62nd Infantry Battalion in Sitio Tuko, leaving at least two soldiers killed and another wounded.

In Bukidnon, in Mindanao island, the NPA fired at the operating troops of the AFP 8th Infantry Battalion in Purok 8, St. Peter village, Malaybalay City on 16 November, leaving one AFP soldier killed in action.

Meanwhile, the NPA-Masbate ambushed paramilitary CAFGU forces in Manlut-od village, in the town of Placer, on 7 November, leaving two CAFGU elements killed. According to NPA-Masbate spokesperson Luz del Mar, the ambush adds to the more than 20 NPA guerilla actions launched in the island-province this year. Del Mar said, “the people’s army’s demolition, snipe, harassment and ambush operations inflicted an almost platoon-size casualty against the AFP, PNP, and CAFGU.”

“These tactical offensives launched by the Red army aim to gradually weaken and frustrate the enemy’s military offensive as well as strengthen the masses’ determination to act and unite against the state’s armed oppression,” del Mar added. **UP**

Groups press removal of Luis Jalandoni's 'terror tag'

Various groups led by the International League of Peoples' Struggle gathered in front of the Philippine Department of Justice on 9 December 2022 to submit a petition for the removal of the terrorist designation of Luis 'Louie' Jalandoni by the Manila government's Anti-Terrorist Council. "We call on all democratic and peace-loving forces to join us in defending the rights of Luis Jalandoni and fight against his unjust designation," said ILPS Secretary General Liza Maza.

In June 2022, the ATC designated Luis Jalandoni as a terrorist, alongside five other persons, Cordillera People's Democratic Front spokesperson Simon Naugsan, Afrecia Alvares, Maria Luisa Pucray, Maria Gigi Ascaño-Tenebroso and Walter Alipio De Asis Cerbito.

Luis Jalandoni served as Chairperson of the NDFP Negotiating Panel in peace talks with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines from 1992 until 2016, when he retired. He is now Senior Adviser to the NDFP Negotiating Panel.

The campaign to revoke the terrorist designation of Jalandoni was launched by the International Committee Defend LJ and Friends of the Filipino People in Struggle. The campaign has gathered over 1,500 signatories supporting the call to revoke the ATC's terror-tagging.



Image: International League of Peoples' Struggles

In an open letter issued 9 December 2022, the International Committee Defend LJ denounced "the terrorist designation of Luis 'Louie' Jalandoni and five others by the Philippines' Anti-Terrorism Council (ATC). This denouncement comes as we gather mounting support from the international community... rightfully calling for the revocation of the ATC's baseless and malicious claims. Louie is a man of peace."

In a related development, on 10 December during International Human Rights Day, hundreds marched to Manila's Presidential Palace to protest the rising number of extrajudicial killings, political prisoners, and the use of the Anti-Terror Law to suppress dissent and curtail freedom of expression under the Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. government. Protests were also conducted in other parts of the country demanding justice for victims of human rights abuses during the Marcos dictatorship. **UP**

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